

Obesity and Weight Concerns in Children with Special Needs



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INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a growing concern worldwide.

More than 41 million children <5 years old are overweight or obese (WHO 2016).

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) noted that 20% of children with special needs (10-17 y/o) were obese compared to 15% of children of the same ages without special needs.

Previous cross-sectional study in T&T showed 15% of children are obese and 17% are overweight.

OBJECTIVES

Aim: To investigate weight concerns in children with special needs.

METHODOLOGY

Data from September 2015 to August 2016 was collected retrospectively from the patient database (Microsoft Excel) for the 5 Community Paediatrics Clinics in SWRHA, T&T.

Children with special needs were categorised as follows:

- Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD),
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD),
- learning difficulty (LD),
- Cerebral Palsy (CP),
- global developmental delay (GDD),
- Trisomy 21,
- other syndromes, and Multiple (>2) diagnoses

Data regarding overweight, obesity, eating concerns, and access to the dietician services were collected.

RESULTS

Total number of patients : 1017 . Males numbered 771.

Age range: 12 months to 22 years.

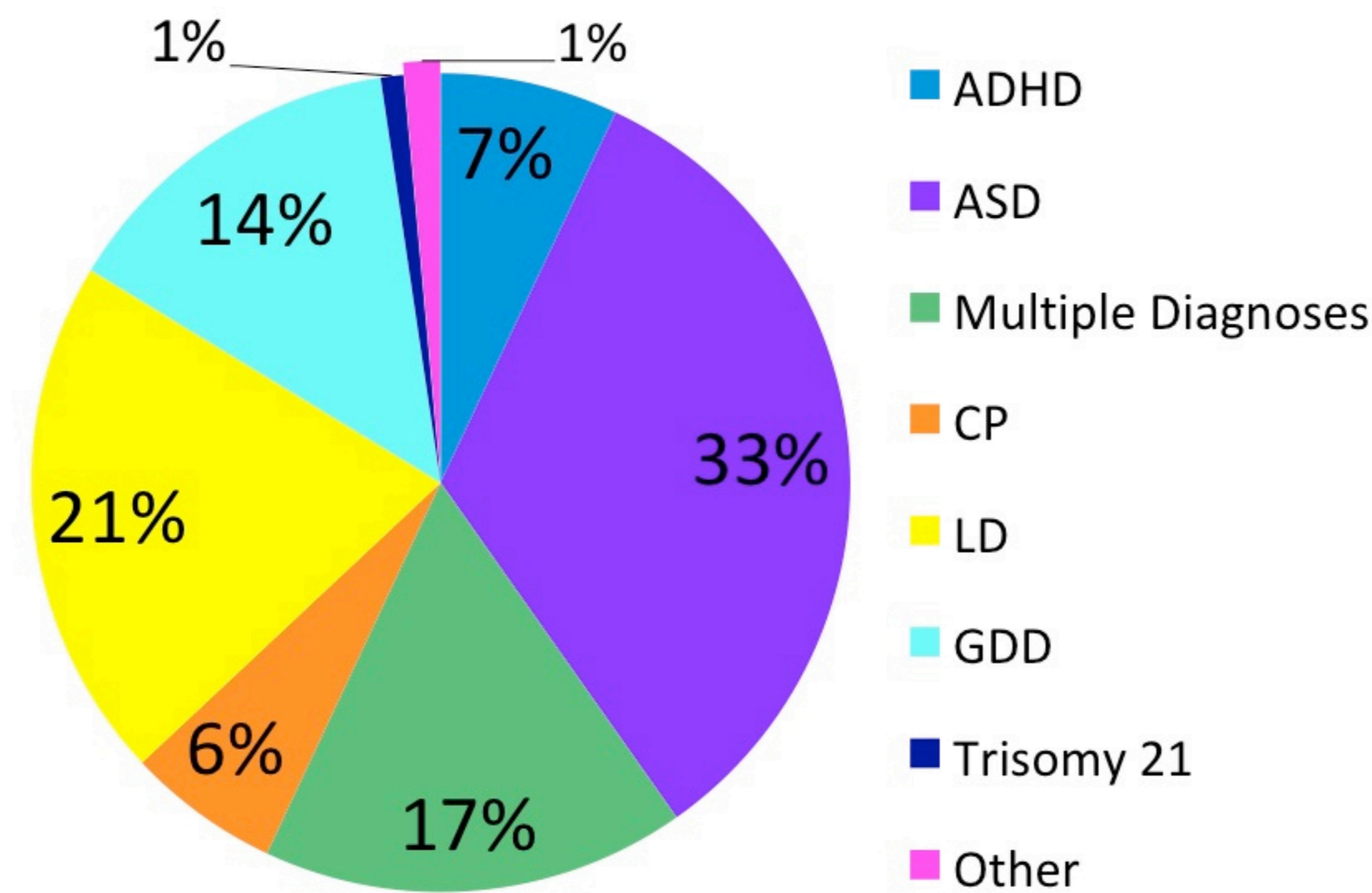


Figure 1. Proportion Of Various Diagnoses Within Clinics

157 children were noted to be overweight or underweight with 9.3% being overweight

There is a high proportion of obese/ overweight patients in Trisomy 21, ADHD, LD, other syndromes and multiple (≥ 2) syndromes.

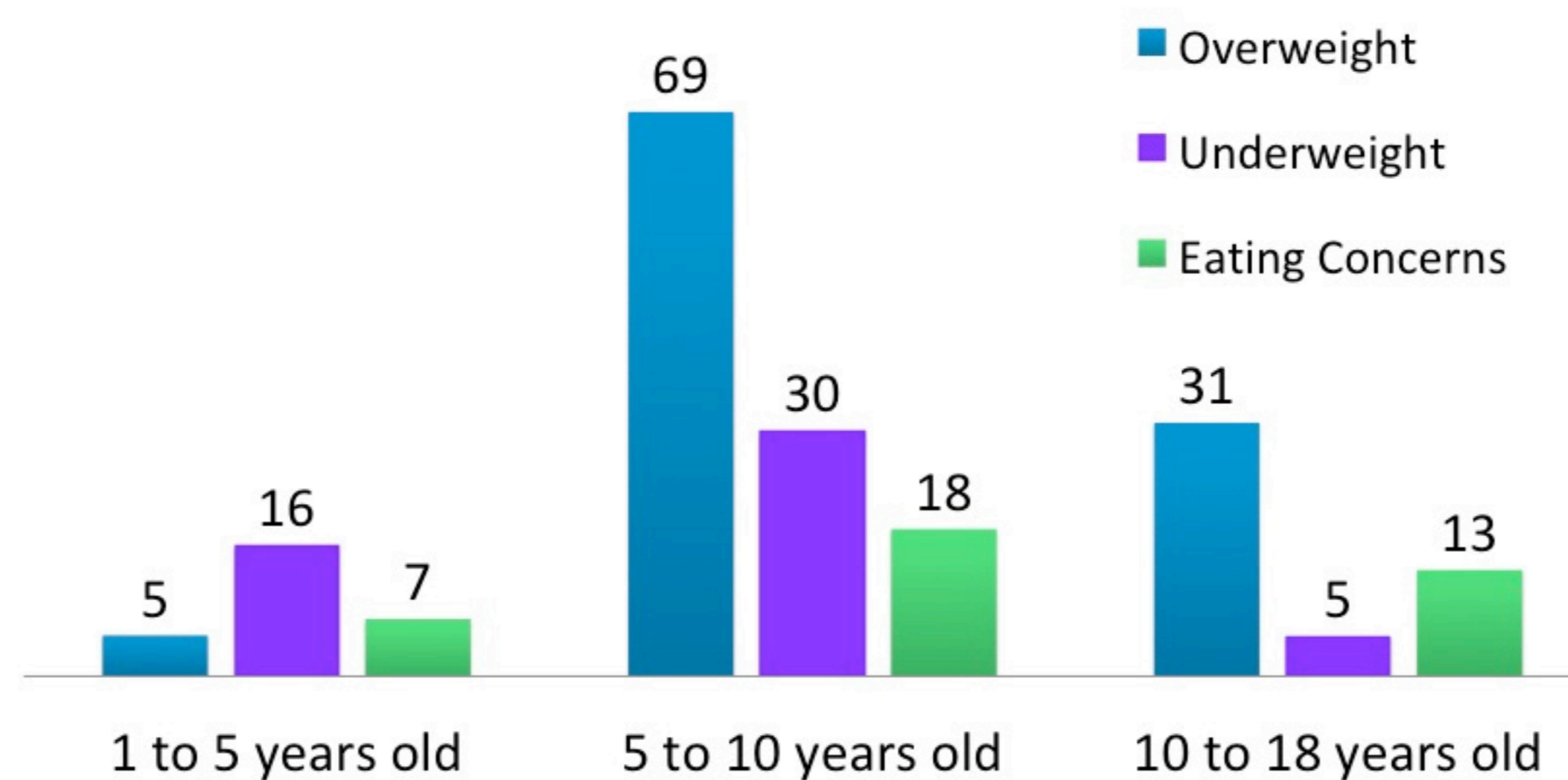


Figure 2. Weight Concerns Across the Age Groups.

Patients with CP were 5 times more likely to be underweight than overweight (OR 5.5). Children with learning difficulties were 5 times more likely to be overweight.

EATING CONCERNS:

ASD had the highest prevalence (7.1%) of eating concerns. 5.1% experienced eating concerns which included swallowing difficulty and sensory food aversion. 80 patients accessed the dietician services.

Disease	Overweight	Underweight
ADHD	15.1 %	4.6%
ASD	3.7 %	3%
Cerebral Palsy, CP	2.7 %	14.8 %
Global Developmental Delay, GDD	9.4 %	12.2 %
Learning Difficulty, LD	17.4 %	3.5 %
Trisomy 21	18.7 %	6.7 %
Other syndromes	16.6 %	11.1 %
Multiple diagnoses	14.6 %	8.7 %

Table 1. Overweight and Underweight children based on Diagnosis

CONCLUSIONS

A high proportion of children with special needs are overweight or obese and as a result are at risk of non-communicable (chronic) disease.

National Policy regarding chronic disease and obesity should give special attention to the needs of children and adults with special needs.

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